

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 293

Exodus 23:20-33

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### Episode Summary

This episode wraps up the remainder of Exodus 23 (vv. 20-33). There are a number of interesting items in these remaining verses, beginning with the Angel in whom the Name (the presence) of God dwelt. That figure is part of the Old Testament Godhead language behind ancient Judaism's (former) theological teaching about two powers in heaven (two Yahweh figures) that Dr. Heiser discussed at length in his book, *The Unseen Realm*. Other issues touched on in this episode are the "hornets" of v. 28, the dimensions of the land and the terminology for its pre-Israelite inhabitants (vv. 30-33).

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 293: Exodus 23:20-33. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike. How are you this week?

**MH:** Pretty good. It's been a productive week, except for Fantasy Football, of course. [laughs]

**TS:** Ooooh.

**MH:** [laughs] Go ahead. Enjoy it. Tell everybody about it.

**TS:** I finally got a win! And guess who is now in last place. Who is that, Mike? Have you seen the rankings?

**MH:** Yes, yes. The Pugnacious Pugs are in last place. [TS laughs] I am one of five 1-3 teams, but I'm ranked last because of my point total.

**TS:** That's fun. I saw that and I started laughing. I'm sorry, but... [MH laughs] Better you than me, because it's been me on the bottom for some time. Thank you, I appreciate it.

**MH:** I know you couldn't wait [laughs] to bring it up. Enjoy it. It's not going to last long. We're going to be on the rebound here.

**TS:** I hear ya. It's not fun being on the bottom.

**MH:** Yep. I hear you. So other than that... [laughs]

**TS:** Well, Mike, as we speak, our conference is going on. I hope we're doing good. I hope everybody's having fun.

**MH:** Yeah, I hope we're doing good, too. [laughs]

**TS:** I hope everybody showed up.

**MH:** I hope nothing's crashed and burning. [laughs]

**TS:** Last year we had major thunderstorms and the power went out in the whole hotel, right in the middle of the conference. That was fun for me to get all of that stuff back up.

**MH:** It's going to go better. I'm sure this one is going better. So no worries.

**TS:** Yep. Well, if you are not physically at the conference, you can still watch it on demand for the next three months. Go to [NakedBibleConference.com](http://NakedBibleConference.com) and check it out, please.

**MH:** Yeah. Well, we're going to finish Exodus 23 today. It's about time. We've been doing chapters 21-23. We left a little bit of 23 at the end, and that's what we're going to cover today, so it's Exodus 23:20-33. That's the end of the chapter. And honestly, I'm not going to say too much about some parts of this, because there's a lot of *Unseen Realm* territory here. But I'm just going to jump in and read a little bit. Then I'll stop at various points. You know what, I'm just going to read the whole thing and then we'll jump in. Those of you who have read *Unseen Realm* are going to know where the touch points are as far as the book goes. If you haven't read the book, I'm sorry, but you need to read the book. Because I'm not going to repeat the book in the podcast. But I will say something about stuff that the book does touch on. So verse 20 begins with God speaking to Moses:

**<sup>20</sup> "Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. <sup>21</sup> Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.**

**22 “But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.**

**23 “When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, 24 you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. 25 You shall serve the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. 26 None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. 27 I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. 28 And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. 29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. 31 And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. 32 You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. 33 They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”**

5:00

That’s verses 20-33, the end of Exodus 23. There are obvious touch points here. This Exodus passage is part of the Two Powers idea. It begins with this comment about sending an angel before the Israelites and the name of God being in the angel. So that’s Two Powers territory—the two Yahwehs idea—that we discussed in *Unseen Realm*. If you want additional data, you need to read the book. It’s chapters 16-18 specifically, and that focuses on the Old Testament data behind the Two Powers in Heaven of later Judaism. Of course, Judaism declared that a heresy in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., which coincides with the advent of Christianity. But this idea of a Godhead is based in Old Testament data.

So we have two Yahweh figures. We have a transcendent, invisible Yahweh and a visible, present Yahweh. Two of them. Sometimes they’re in the same scene at the same time. The Angel is one of these figures, but certainly not the only one. And other times they appear separately. So if you are listening to this, I’m well-acquainted with evangelical (and otherwise) positions that avoid trying to see some of these things (especially like seeing the Angel of Yahweh as Yahweh himself). And I address the weaknesses of such avoidances in the book and provide a number of sources for that critique. It’s not just me. You really can’t

take that position and pay attention to passages like Genesis 48:15-16, where you have the Angel and God fused together in the dialogue in Jacob's prayer by a singular verb, "May he bless these boys." Who is "he"? Well, it's God in one stanza, God in the second stanza, and the angel in the third stanza. And the verb is singular. It's not, "May *they* bless the boys," it's, "May *he*..." And this is Jacob's assessment of the events in his life that involve Yahweh—the four consonants, the divine name. And he refers to Yahweh as *ha elohim* and also *ha malak* (the angel) in that passage. I think that passage also addresses the secular approach (the critical non-confessional or Jewish scholarly approach)—that the angel only *seems* equated with Yahweh because of this messenger formula. The messenger was understood to represent the king, so that's why you get first person language, so on and so forth. When the angel shows up, he speaks as Yahweh because that's what messengers do. They represent. They're the proxies for who sent them. That's all well and good, but that doesn't work with Genesis 48:15-16 because the angel doesn't speak. This is Jacob's assessment of the episodes in his life that involved Yahweh directly. This is the terminology that Jacob uses.

So we have this two Yahwehs idea. In this passage in Exodus 23, the key idea is that Yahweh's name is in this angel. The standard messenger formula approach ignores that detail. It ignores the Name Theology. I'm also aware that some scholars (including evangelicals) don't really like the Name Theology. They want to distance themselves from it. Other scholars, though, recently (Michael Hundley is one I'll mention here; his work is really important here) have rebutted these denials, including the fairly recent work by Sandra Richter, who teaches at Wheaton. Richter is one who distances herself from what has traditionally been called Name Theology. Hundley's work addresses her criticisms and, frankly, just lays them to rest. So some of that is in *Unseen Realm*. Other parts are in some of the published journal articles I've done. So I'm well aware that Name Theology isn't universally accepted. Nothing is universally accepted in scholarship. But what we're saying in *Unseen Realm* and what we're saying here is on good, solid, scholarly ground. So those of you who are new to this, you need to know that. I'm not going to be surprised by any criticisms. They've all been addressed, either by me or by somebody else.

Now the short version of this (since I'm not going to reproduce *Unseen Realm* content) is I'm just going to read a little section from the FaithLife Study Bible. I did a majority of the notes for the Torah and Joshua and Judges and I did a lot of the sidebars for that Study Bible. One of them is called "Old Testament Godhead Language." So I'm just going to read an excerpt here:

10:00

The relationship between Yahweh and the Angel of Yahweh ("Angel of the Lord") provides the most familiar example of "two Yahwehs." The Old Testament writers at times deliberately make the Angel of Yahweh indistinguishable from Yahweh (e.g., Exodus 3:1–14 [MH: that's the burning bush]). For instance, according to

Exodus 23, the Angel has Yahweh's "Name" in him (Exod 23:20–23). This passage gives a glimpse of the Hebrew Bible's "Name theology," in which reference to "the Name" actually refers to Yahweh Himself. Thus, in Exodus 23, Yahweh indicates that He is in the Angel. And yet, in other passages, Yahweh and the Angel can be simultaneously—but separately—present (Judges 6). Various Old Testament passages attribute God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt to both the God of Israel and the Angel (e.g., Judges 2:1–3; 1 Samuel 8:8; Micah 6:4). In light of Deuteronomy 4:37, which states the "presence" [MH: *panim*] of Yahweh was responsible for Israel's deliverance from Egypt, these passages provide a constructive case for binitarianism [MH: a Godhead with two Yahwehs in it]. The divine presence, of course, is Yahweh Himself, His "essence." Perhaps most tellingly in this theology is the text of Genesis 48:15–16, which fuses God and the Angel. Jacob, near death and pronouncing blessing on Joseph's sons, speaks of God's saving action in a way that highlights the fusion of Yahweh and the Angel...

The point there is the singular verb. It's "may *he* bless the boys." It's not "may *they*," even though we have *elohim* and the angel as apparently separate entities. But the verb there puts them together. "May *he* bless the boys," because they're interchangeable. That's the point.

Now we also have, in this regard, the captain of Yahweh's host. I'm out of the FaithLife Study Bible now, just to make a few other comments. There are other ways to approach this. We have the burning bush incident in Exodus where Moses is told by God to remove sandals from his feet because he's on holy ground. You see that language in Joshua 5, where the captain of the Lord's host appears to Joshua. He looks like any other man. Joshua asks him, "Are you friend or foe?" He says, "I'm the captain of the Lord's host. Take your shoes off from where you stand, because you're standing on holy ground." The key phrase there... Obviously that language links the reader's mind back to Exodus 3, where God himself is present. And of course, the angel is in the bush. But the phrase in Joshua 5 of the captain of the Lord's host, that he had a drawn sword in his hand... If you search for that Hebrew phrase, it occurs only two other times in the Bible (Numbers 22 and 1 Chronicles), both of which refer to the figure of the Angel of the Lord. So there are a number of ways to get to these points. But enough of that. You can read the book. But this passage is significant. It has a lot of theological significance.

But we're going to move on to the rest of it—the things that aren't necessarily in (or in as much detail as in) *Unseen Realm*. The passage itself, the commentary after we read about the Angel... You get to verse 23,

**<sup>23</sup> "When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites..."**

And then you get this list—the grocery list of pre-Israelite inhabitants. So that’s what we’re looking at here. That’s the context.

So I want to share some observations on not only those points but a few things all the way through to the end. But we’re going to actually end up with the grocery list. So it starts here in verse 23, but we’re going to end up in our discussion for this episode spending a little bit of time on that specifically. But until we get back to the people groups, we’re just going to go through the passage and just hit a few things, as is our pattern. Verse 24, I think, is significant.

**<sup>24</sup> you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do...**

15:00

It’s very apparent... I’m going to telegraph where I’m going to end up here. The names from the list (Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, Jebusites) are significant. This is going to sound a little bit odd. But the conquest (this much you already know from *Unseen Realm* if you’ve read it) isn’t just indiscriminate. It’s not just, “Oh, we have to go in there and fight battles.” The conquest is about kick-starting the return to Eden. It’s about avoiding and defeating chaos (chaos enemies). And chaos is defined in Old Testament theology as all that is opposed to the way God wants things to be. It is anti-Eden. It is represented metaphorically by Babel in many places—Babylon. This is what the conquest is actually about. It’s about re-establishing Eden, a place where God is going to come to dwell on earth. God talks about the journey to Canaan in that way. “When you get into the land, I’m going to be your God. You’re going to be my people.” There’s this thing about establishing his name in a certain place. It’s temple language. This is what it’s about. It’s about re-establishing the Edenic presence—the Edenic dream, God’s original plan—on earth and defeating anti-Eden (everything that opposes that). That’s the way we need to understand the conquest, and that’s therefore the way we need to look at the names (Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites). There’s something there that’s isn’t obvious to us on the surface, but to an ancient reader, there would’ve been things that stood out. We do get verse 24 that telegraphs very clearly that this is about the defeat and the dismissal of other gods.

**<sup>24</sup> you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces.**

There’s an inherently religious theological element that drives the conquest narratives. It’s not just about having a place to live. There’s more going on here than that. And believe it or not, a lot of that is revealed in these names. We’re going to spend a little bit of time at the end of the episode on that. You go to verses 25-26:

**<sup>25</sup> You shall serve the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. <sup>26</sup> None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.**

Now we've had the fall (in Genesis 3) and the curse of the fall is mortality. Humans were not created to die. But when the events of Genesis 3 happen, they're driven from Eden—the place where life is because God is there and he's the source of life. Humans are estranged from God. The story is about losing immortality. So we're still in that condition. But look at what God is saying about the land. It's Edenic in its feel. "I'm going to bless your bread and your water. You're going to have enough to eat and drink." There's going to be abundance there. "I will take sickness away from you." It's Edenic. "None shall miscarry or be barren in your land." It's Edenic. All of these things—these hardship conditions, these tragic circumstances of life—none of them are associated in any way in Genesis with Eden. In fact, Eden is the exact opposite of this—being fruitful and multiplying and having abundance and all these things. So again, the description of the conquest is cast in this restoration of Eden idea, and the flip side of that coin is the defeat of (the opposition to) chaos. All that is anti-Eden, is opposed to the way God wants things. In verse 27 we read:

**<sup>27</sup> I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.**

What's interesting here is this notion of God sending his terror. What does that mean? This language actually shows up two other times. There's Deuteronomy 2:25. Let me read that to you:

**<sup>25</sup> This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you on the peoples who are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.'**

This is a foreshadowing. When the Israelites go in to conquer the land, the people are going to be in a panic. And God is going to be behind that. God is going to put them in this state of mind. This is like psychological warfare. But God is saying, "I'm going to put them in this condition." And Deuteronomy 2:25 gives us a little bit of the means by which God is going to do that. The other reference is Joshua 2:9. And this is when they're in the land. They're reconnoitering Jericho. We know that story. So if we go to Joshua 2:9... This is when Rahab is hiding the two spies:



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**<sup>9</sup> and [she] said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.**

It's an illustration of what God had said back in Deuteronomy and back here in Exodus 23:27, “I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come,” and then Deuteronomy 2:25, that language. “The people are going to be in dread and fear of you.” This is God-caused. These people have soldiers. They have armies. They have walled cities. Ostensibly, there's no specific reason to fear the Israelites who are not a trained militia. They've just spent hundreds of years in slavery and bondage in Egypt. This is not a trained army. Ostensibly, there's no reason why any of these other trained armies who have battle experience should be fearing this bunch. And God knows that and says, “Look, I'm going to take care of that detail. I will put my fear and dread... I'm going to poison their minds with it. They're going to be in a panic.” All of that is important when you get to verse 28. Because I'm going to suggest that this reference to God putting his terror and dread upon the inhabitants of the land should lead us to interpret the next verse in a certain way. Here's the next verse:

**<sup>28</sup> And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you.**

Now I think we need to factor in these other references to God imposing psychological warfare here—poisoning the minds, as it were, of the occupants of the land with fear and dread. When you get to this verse, everybody asks, “What are the hornets? What's that?” And you have a few options at the outset.

1. Well, it could be literal insect warfare. So God sent literal insect swarms to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan. Do we ever read that in the conquest accounts? Nope.
2. The second option is that God sent a plague carried by insects on the inhabitants of Canaan. So God sent disease and that was a factor in the conquest. Do we ever read about *that* in the conquest accounts? Nope.
3. The third option is the language is a metaphor for human armies. This is a little more interesting. Now that does happen elsewhere. There are other passages where armies are described as scorpions. There is Old Testament material for that. It happens a couple of times, like a swarm of locusts like the book of Joel, which is both an actual locust swarm and then the language is used for invading armies. So that kind of thing does happen in the Old Testament. But it makes little sense here because of



Joshua 24:12. Let me read that. This is the covenant renewal at Shechem. Joshua gathers the tribes in verse 1.

**<sup>2</sup> And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel...”**

And then Joshua starts narrating. Now it’s cast as God speaking through Joshua. Maybe this was written down revelation or something like that. But you get down to verse 11 and the speaker there, “I gave them into your hand” is the voice of God through Joshua. He says, “I gave them into your hand...” This is right after a list (Amorites, Perizzites, Canannites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites).

**<sup>12</sup> And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow.**

It’s talking about Sihon and Og. “I sent the hornet before you, and one of the effects was that those two kings (Sihon and Og) were driven out from before you.” So if this insect language refers to human armies, that doesn’t really work with Joshua 24:12, because the verse very specifically says, “You didn’t win these battles by your sword and your bow.” So you can’t really make that equation here, even though it happens elsewhere in the Old Testament. Now frankly, none of those three views (literal insect warfare, a plague carried by insects, or this is a metaphor for human armies) has anything going for it. [laughs] Sad to say. The most lengthy study of this (and there aren’t many, but there’s a long one) is by Edward Neufeld. It’s entitled, “Insects as Warfare Agents in the Ancient Near East.” It covers Exodus 23:28, Deuteronomy 7:20, Joshua 24:12, and then a passage in Isaiah as well. It’s in the journal *Orientalia*, volume 49:1. It’s a 1980 article. It’s 27 pages long. So it’s a substantive study on this. But honestly, it’s pretty unsatisfying. You basically read through this whole article and there’s no evidence for ancient Near Eastern armies using insects in warfare or in metaphorical meaning for insects in that ancient Near Eastern literature. There’s only one clear reference to an ancient Near Eastern king being referred to in insect language, and that’s Pharaoh. (“He of the bee” is one of pharaoh’s titles.) But it’s pretty clear that God didn’t use Egyptians to drive out the Canaanites in the conquest. That’s very obvious. So you might wonder what Neufeld does in nearly 30 pages if all that’s the case. Here’s his conclusion. This is why it’s really unsatisfying. He writes:

Though more evidence is needed, this discussion points to the strong possibilities that the use of insects as warfare agents goes back to prehistoric times [MH: this is actually where he camps in the article for a long time] and this type of weaponry belonged to early man’s “natural” objects such as those made from wood or stone.

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The biblical narratives in question seem to be accurate recalls, blurred by strong sentiments, of warfare episodes of a far distant past which were lived through. Tong-cherished tradition changed them into glorious events, and the narratives call up their remembrance and reinstate them in concrete imagery. They are part of a group of ideas associated with end-products from the very ancient past's functioning institutions in warfare experiences. Originally, some of the events took strong hold of the imitative imagination, and gradually became an integral part of the actual stream of consciousness of national life of ancient Israel. Hence, these accounts represent the continuity of consciousness of past perceptual experiences revived as images in a new setting at the ideational level. It is almost re-living the past, dominated by an emotionally charged situation of new developments. In this sense, these events lived on in history. They had a cumulative impact upon the need to assess ambitions and to renew traditions.

In other words, the biblical writer is reminiscing about a speculative past. (It's speculative because it's prehistorical. There are no written records for any of this.) So the biblical writer is reminiscing about a speculative past and just sort of projecting that on either his current circumstances or the circumstances of Israel's entry into Canaan. That's all he's got. Like they were influenced by something they may have thought happened in the past, so that's the way they wrote this. It's very, very unsatisfying. It feels kind of made up. [laughs] Let's be honest. It's the best he could do, I guess. While it's true that ancient people... These are eras more recent than the Old Testament period (the conquest and the monarchy). Ancient people did use insects. There's just nothing to lean on here for the biblical era. If you want an article on this, I think this one's available online. Adrienne Mayor. She is the same scholar who wrote *The First Fossil Hunters* about the misidentification of dinosaur bones as giants in antiquity. Adrienne Mayor wrote *Greek Fire, Poison Arrows, and Scorpion Bombs: Biological and Chemical Warfare in the Ancient World*. That's a 2008 title. She focuses on the Greco-Roman period, so it's much later. But yeah, ancient people did this. But all that Neufeld has in his article is, "Well, this must be a prehistoric memory." Again, it's just not very satisfying. Now I would say, in light of all that, I think it's just easier to let verse 27 inform verse 28.

**<sup>27</sup> I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. <sup>28</sup> And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you.**

Tigay in his commentary on Deuteronomy summarizes how it would work to let verse 27 inform verse 28. He's actually writing about Deuteronomy 7:20 (that particular description) because this is a commentary on Deuteronomy. But I think this is really well said. So he's talking about the Hebrew word *tsir 'ah*, which is this word for hornet. He writes:

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Hebrew *tsir 'ah*. A more likely translation is “hornets” or “wasps,” as in rabbinic Hebrew, since that is the only actually attested meaning of the word. Literally the text means that ferocious swarms of wasps will hunt down the remaining Canaanites and sting them to death. Some commentators compare this to instances of populations driven from their homes by swarms of ferocious insects. Another possibility is that *tsir 'ah* is a metonymy for panic or frenzy like that caused by wasps and means that God will cause the remaining Canaanites to panic and flee or be caught.

Now honestly that makes a lot of sense with verse 27. He has a footnote. He adds this:

An apt parallel to the present case is Gk. *oistros*, which means both “horsefly” and “vehement passion,” “madness,” “frenzy”; cf. *Odyssey* 22:297–300, where Athena causes Odysseus’s foes to panic and stampede like a herd of cattle driven wild by a horsefly. [MH: It’s imagery.] In this case the meaning of *tsir 'ah* is similar to *mehumah*, “turmoil,” in v. 23 or *'eimah*, “terror,” in Exod. 23:27 and elsewhere.

So where does this leave us? Sending the hornet (the *tsir 'ah*) before the Israelites, I’m going to suggest, simply means that God would strike the inhabitants of the land with psychological and perhaps irrational fear, reading it in light of verse 27. So in Joshua 24:12, Joshua reminds the people (he’s the voice of God there) that the victories they gained weren’t brought about by foot soldiers and weapons. God was immediately involved. Let’s go to verses 30-33. I’ll read them again.

**<sup>30</sup> Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. <sup>31</sup> And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. <sup>32</sup> You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. <sup>33</sup> They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”**

Now verse 30 (“Little by little I will drive them out from before you until you have increased and possess the land.”) sounds like (and it’s been taken this way by a lot of scholars) a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts. In other words, it has the feel of something added to the text after Israel’s failure at the end of Joshua’s life. When the set of conditions (this “little by little” thing) emerge as Israel enters into the period of the Judges, this sounds like the circumstance of the period of Judges—when that period starts, after Joshua dies. Because the job isn’t done. So this sounds like it was prophesying that or foreshadowing that. “Little by little” feels

like quite a contrast to other promises in the Torah to drive out the inhabitants. This is the only place you're going to get this "little by little" language, or at least maybe one or two places. The writer (the text) seems to already know the Israelites failed to believe and trust in Yahweh, so the land would be rid of the targeted people groups little by little. And not only just little by little but at a time when Israel has increased, which would be later (period of the Judges, maybe the monarchy, something like that). That's a circumstance that just fits Israel's later history—some time later than the days of Moses or Joshua. One could, on the other hand, say that the passage presumes all this, but you could just say this is a foreshadowing. But that still leaves you with the issue of other statements where God says he's going to drive out the inhabitants of the land. So which is it? Is it a foreshadowing? Or is it something that was added later to explain the failure of Israel or to link the failure of Israel back to God's original desire and promise to have them drive these people out of the land? Sarna writes this:

This passage qualifies the foregoing promises, which imply the speedy conquest of the entire land. That would leave large areas of the country uninhabited because the people of Israel was insufficiently numerous to fill the void that would be created following the expulsion of the native population. Deuteronomy 7:22 gives the same explanation.

So you have one other case here.

35:00

**"The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little. You may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you."**

Sarna continues:

That the initial campaigns were unable to complete the conquest is explicitly stated in the books of Joshua and Judges (Josh. 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12–13, 16; Judg. 1:19, 21, 27–35; 2:20–23; 3:1–5). This historic reality generated varied responses. Judges 2:20–21 explains it as divine punishment for infidelity to the covenant; Judges 2:22–23 and 3:1, 4 see it as a means of trying Israel's faith; and Judges 3:2 understands the protracted nature of the conquest as a prudent strategy for training successive generations in the art of warfare.

Let me read you Judges 3:2.

**<sup>2</sup> It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before.**

That's why it took so long to drive them out of the land, despite a number of places in the Torah where it has an immediate feel. So the whole issue is this. There are places in the Torah where the conquest has a feel of, "This is going to be quick. God's just going to wipe them out." Then there are other places like where we're camped here that, "I'm not going to drive them out quickly. It's going to be little by little," and then you have different reasons for this. So what do we do with that? Your two options are 1) This is a foreshadowing. It's a foreshadowing of what's going to happen. Or 2) These qualifications are a means by which the writer (a later writer who is living in the situation) is trying to understand, "Well, why didn't this happen quickly?" It's because they did enter into covenants with them. They did follow the other gods. And this was good. It was Providential, too, because then successive generations learned what it means to fight in wars. We actually got a good army out of this. In other words, neither is unhistorical. It's just one is sort of a theologization of history after the fact to explain (or to at least apply) the set of conditions and align them with the original statements about God saying, "I'm going to drive these people out of the land." Okay, why are we still here doing this? "Well, I'll tell you why." So that gets worked out—gets explained—in books like Joshua and Judges, which are written after the time of Joshua. Joshua... there's no indication he wrote he wrote the whole book. The book never claims that. He certainly didn't write Judges. So whoever wrote that could have sprinkled a little of that in in certain passages (Deuteronomy 7 and Exodus 23) to let the reader know, "Okay, this is what messed things up." It might read as a foreshadowing, but someone else could just read it like we've done here and just said, "Okay. The writer or a subsequent editor is trying to link these two things—trying to link what happened (what the set of circumstances are in the book of Judges—here we are, this is our reality) with God's desire to drive out the inhabitants of the land. Why wasn't it quick? Why didn't it work? "Well, here's why."

So it's another good example of things in not only the Torah but books that are related to this time period. We need to be thinking about (way back in the first episode) "What does history mean? How does inspiration work? Is God allowed to prompt someone to connect passages this way?" Of course he is. Inspiration is a process. It is not an event. Process, not event. God wants certain things done certain ways and he will bring people along to do that so that the finished product gets his approval. "Good job. Anybody who reads this now is going to know why things didn't work out." So it's just one of those things that we keep encountering in Exodus where we have to really think about how we think about history and inspiration and all these other things. Because a lot of this doesn't conform to the way we would do it. Well, it's just too bad that God didn't prompt one of *you* to write this, isn't it? Or me? He didn't do that. God prompted the people way back then (either boots-on-the-ground people or people who came a little bit afterwards). God has his own reasons for doing this sort of thing.

How do we frame the whole discussion of inspiration, historicity, whatnot? None of this violates either in my book. If you need an introduction to how we should

think about historicity and all this kind of stuff, the first episode in this series... This is why that episode is important, trying to show... It's really about how our thinking is framed. Are we going to impose the way we would do something on the text, or are we just going to let it be what it is? Fundamentally, that's the question. You want to impose the way you'd do it on the text? Well, be warned and filled. You can do that. But as I brought up in that first episode, I challenge you to write an objective history of yourself. See if you can do that and meet the modern standards for all this. If that piques your interest, good. Go back and listen to the first episode of the Exodus series. If you've already listened to it, I hope that jars your memory. I think you could still get something out of it if you went back and listened to it because we keep running into these things. Verse 31:

**<sup>31</sup> And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates,**

These are the parameters of the land. I've already made the comment in the podcast that not every place in the Torah or elsewhere where the dimensions of the land are mentioned... they don't always agree. There are different reasons for that. Just so that you're aware of that. Sarna notes of this particular instance:

The ideal boundaries of the land are now set forth. As in Genesis 15:18–21, the ethnographic [MH: refers to the people groups] description of verses 23, 28 is supplemented by a closer geographic definition. At no time in Israelite history, even at the height of the Davidic-Solomonic empire, were these boundaries a reality.

Now he has a footnote at this point:

David and Solomon asserted political and economic hegemony as far north as the Euphrates (1 Kings 5:1) [MH: that is true—that's mentioned] but [David and Solomon] did not dispossess the local peoples and settle Israelites in their stead.

This is, of course, an issue that has some relevance for eschatology. Long ago I did a series on why an obsession with end times (eschatology) is a waste of time. This is one of the topics: the issue of what exactly is "The Promised Land?" The dimensions are not always the same when you look at the descriptions. So what is the Promised Land? That's a fundamental question. What are we talking about here? And then if we can figure out what it is, did Israel ever get that? Because there are going to be people who say, "The kingdom promise of the land was fulfilled and so we don't need to look for a later fulfillment," like in pre-millennial eschatology or something like that. So there are people who want to see the land promises as already fulfilled or abstracted to the Church—a different trajectory. But the fact of the matter is that the specifics of at least this passage (and a few others—Genesis 15, for example)... These dimensions were never actually met



in Israel's history. And so a certain view of eschatology can use this information to argue for a future role (1000-year reign or something like that)... There are like ten other issues that go into all this, so this isn't a slam-dunk or anything like that. It's far from it. Because then you can ask the question, "Did Israel as a people sin away the promises?" Because you do have Leviticus 26 that says, "If you do X, Y, or Z, I'm going to expel you from the land." And of course, we know that happened.

So should we even be having the land discussion? "They came back from exile." Yeah, two tribes did, but if you actually read in the prophets, the restoration from exile doesn't involve just two. There are a number of passages that view restoration—healing from exile, the end of the exile—as *all* the tribes. Then on the other side of the end times question, you say, "Yep, that's right. Go to Acts 2." Jews scattered all over the world (not just the ones that were put in and stayed in Babylon or Persia. Jews from all over the Mediterranean, whose ancestors had been scattered abroad, returned to the land. And they hear the gospel. They go back and they... This is the beginning of The Kingdom of God (as relating to Jesus and, frankly, as relating to Eden). It is not just a place in the Middle East the size of New Jersey. It's the whole world. So all this kingdom talk is not about a future millennium that's like Israel. All that talk should be viewed through the lens of the work of Jesus and the foundation of the Church and the Great Commission, which ultimately is supposed to take us back to Eden. The whole world is God's.

45:00

So this land question becomes a factor. I just wanted to briefly mention it, if you're interested in the eschatology here, you can always go look that up on my website. But here you have an instance where the parameters of the land are mentioned, so I thought I would throw that in. Now verse 32:

**<sup>32</sup>You shall make no covenant with them and their gods.**

Some scholars want this to be added later (like we just talked about a few verses earlier) because of the Gibeonite deception in Joshua 9. The Gibeonites deceive Joshua into making the covenant with them. But this statement taken just as it is certainly could have been a precursor to that or a foreshadowing. So it doesn't really solve anything.

And this brings us to the final item for today's episode. Just a few comments on the people groups of verses 23 and 28. I'll just read those two verses again:

**<sup>23</sup>"When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out..."**



**<sup>28</sup> And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you.**

Now these two lists are two of 14 Old Testament expulsion lists (scholars call them)—lists of pre-Israelite occupants to be expelled from the land. Now those lists do not always agree in content or order and they really have to be viewed as summative in nature, not exhaustive (any one of them). The major study on these matters is a hard-to-find article. Tomoo Ishida (a Japanese scholar) wrote an article called “The Structure and Historical Implications of the Lists of Pre-Israelite Nations.” It’s from the journal *Biblica*, which has a lot of its issues online. So you can go look that up. Volume 60.4 (1979). It’s 30 pages long, so it’s a substantive study. The content of that (all the expulsion lists) is well beyond this episode. There are, of course, other people group terms. Think about that. You get these lists of the people groups who are supposed to be expelled. But there are other people group terms not listed in those who are targeted, not just for expulsion, but elimination. And a number of these are people who happen to be unusually tall. They’re described this way. Let me give you the list:

- Anakim
- Rephaim
- Amorites (Amos 2:9-10 for their height)
- Zuzim/Zamzummim
- Emim
- The “sons of Rapha” (Goliath and his brothers)

None of those terms show up in the expulsion lists. But they’re nevertheless part of the picture. And there’s still a third group. There are other targeted people groups in terms of elimination (that are supposed to be driven out from the land) that are neither present in the expulsion lists nor collectively or directly described as unusually tall:

- Philistines
- Cherethites
- Pelethites
- Carians
- Capthorim
- Avvim
- Amalekites
- Horites
- Geshurites
- Girzites

All these peoples end up being part of the conquest narratives in some way. Now in my session last August in Lubbock, I focused on identifying these people

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groups as a way of showing the coherence of the view I took in *Unseen Realm*. And that is that the specific killing episodes in the conquest narratives targeted the descendants of the Nephilim. They're the ones that are specifically targeted, not everybody else. The short version of that view is that there are more than verbs of killing associated with the conquest commands. There's "drive out," "expel," "drive away," "cast away"... There are different Hebrew lemmas here. They're not all just verbs of killing. When you actually look up where the verbs of killing occur, geographically they're in the same areas, regions, and even more specific than that, cities, where the Anakim or other unusually tall people are said to have been spotted or known to be. I don't think that's a coincidence. The conquest itself begins with a giant clan, Sihon and Og. Because in the Transjordan, we're told in Deuteronomy 2 and 3 that "the descendants of Esau have taken care of most of these people. They got rid of the Emim and the Zamzummim and people like... They're the Rephaim that come from the Anakim." All this kind of stuff. But God tells Moses and Joshua, "I want you to go up to Bashan, and there are the last vestiges of these folks, the last of the Rephaim there and the Amorites." ("Amorites" is a very, very important term here.) And that's where they're sent. In the Transjordan, that's it. This is the vestige of these guys. The Anakim (who come from the Nephilim), Rephaim...

So when they get into the land... The Transjordan is taken care of with Bashan. You get into the land, and guess what? Just play it out. The conquest happens this way. You get to Joshua 11, when Joshua defines what victory is and the conquest, "There are no more Anakim in the land." I don't think these things are coincidental. These are pieces of a matrix of ideas. So I'm not going to repeat my Lubbock content here. There's no way I could. This is actually one of the topics I'm thinking about doing on the Naked Bible Cruise, going through that material step by step. I'm not sure about that yet. But I can't say at this point that you can take all of these names in all these expulsion lists—the "tall" list, the ones that don't fit on either of those... You could take all of these names and associate them with pre-Israelite invasions by peoples who not only all had giant traditions, but their literary traditions about giants and about certain descendants of giants, they're all traceable back to Babel/Babylon—the anti-Eden, the ground-zero of supernatural chaos tradition in the mind of the Old Testament writers. I don't think that's coincidental either. That might sound weird. How can you get all those names to fit in that bucket? It's actually several buckets. The major groups are Amorites, the Hittite-Hurrian group, and the Sea Peoples. Those are the three buckets. Those three buckets (big umbrella groups) were... You can fit all of the people group names in the conquest narratives into one of those groups, and they were all in Canaan before the Israelites got there. They all have giant traditions from before the flood. They cross-fertilize each other. They're all traceable back to Babylon.

The Amorites (I'm just throwing stuff out here now)... You realize that Hammurabi was an Amorite. [laughs] You go to the Mesopotamian literature, that's where he comes from. Because the Amorites, who are from roughly Syria (we'll just call it Syria), migrated down not only into Canaan, but they swept

through Babylon, through Mesopotamia. And at one point, basically all of the city-states of Mesopotamia were run by Amorite kings. It's no coincidence that Og of Bashan back in Canaan uses the title "the king of the Amorites." Why? Because he wants to be linked to this tradition, and he is in various ways. Hammurabi was an Amorite king. And this is where you get the literature about the Apkallu that's the immediate precursor to Genesis 6:1-4. This is how this works. There's a conceptual matrix going on here that is associated with the pre-Israelite occupants of the land. We get vestiges of that in Deuteronomy 2-3 and in Numbers 13:32-33 ("the Anakim who are from the Nephilim"—links to the Anakim and the Rephaim).

All of this is just a big pool of ideas. It's inherently theological. It's inherently about chaos and anti-Eden traditions. And that is the way the conquest is framed. And you can get the gist of that in *Unseen Realm*, but this is something I'm going to be working on for years. What you get in *Unseen Realm* is the skeleton of it. There's a lot that's going on here.

I want to just illustrate a little bit and take five minutes and illustrate the terminology issue. Let's take "Canaanite." A term like "Canaanite" frankly encompasses *all* of the other ones. So we have these three buckets (Amorites, Hittite-Hurrians, Sea Peoples). They move into Canaan. Guess what? If you're an occupant of Canaan, you are a... Canaanite! Canaanite is not a distinct ethnic group. It means occupant of Canaan. And we actually get this in Genesis 10:15-20. Let me read this to you:

**<sup>15</sup> Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, <sup>16</sup> and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, <sup>17</sup> the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, <sup>18</sup> the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. <sup>19</sup> And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. <sup>20</sup> These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.**

55:00

Well, I thought they were the Canaanites—Ham/Canaan? Okay, in verse 20 (the reference to the sons of Ham), recall that Canaan was fathered by Ham (Genesis 9:20-27). We did a whole episode in the podcast on that. Canaan was cursed in that passage, not Ham, resulting in his subjugation by the Shemites, who are not exclusively Semites either. Read Genesis 10:21-30. He's also subjugated to the Japhethites. Since there are people groups who can be subsumed under the Amorite, the Mitanni-Hurrian-Hittite, and Sea People migration or invasions, it's tempting to see this curse as playing out in history via those invasions. What I mean by that is if you look at the list in Genesis 10, it's obviously not just people giving birth to baby people. Who does Canaan father? He fathers Sidon (that's Phoenicia), Heth (that's the Hittites), the Jebusites, the Amorites (North Syria),

the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites. Apparently the Amorites from Irqata (that's the Arvadites)... I don't want to get too far into the weeds here. The Arvadites are also Phoenicia. Sinites... That word shows up in Ugaritic—the south coast of Ugarit, which is near Syria. That's the Amorite locale.

Genesis 10 is not about just human biological reproduction and physical lineages—ethnic lineages. It's about the inheritance—the heritage—of *places*. These places are going to be occupied by a wide range of people including Hittites and Amorites and whatnot. The importance of all of this is that the passage (Genesis 10) gives us a picture of what people groups constituted the land of Canaan. It's not about biology and genetics. It's about geography. It's the table of nations. It's not the table of genetic relationships, it's the table of nations. Genesis 10 gives us a picture of what people groups constituted the land of Canaan. The passage is about geography, not biology. The names in Canaan's "lineage" in this passage show up in the conquest expulsion lists, which target people occupying the land prior to Israel's arrival. The passage also links Canaan with the Amorites. It establishes (whatever this means) that the Amorites are in some way synonymous with Canaanites. Canaan was home to the Amorites because of the Amorite invasions. So Amorites are Canaanites. There's more nuancing to this, but I'm just giving you the rough sketches. Terms like "Hittite," "Hivite," "Amorite," and "Jebusite" are used as synonyms (or subsets) of "Canaanite" in passages like Genesis 36:2-3, Ezekiel 16:3 (that's a great verse).

**<sup>3</sup> and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.**

1:00:00

It means that Jerusalem was in a land called Canaan that was Amorite and Hittite. But they're all Canaanites because Amorites and Hittites settling in Canaan are *Canaanites*. A lot of these terms overlap. The Sea Peoples are part of this. The Philistines and other people-names we listed earlier are pre-Israelite occupants. So the Philistines are actually also Canaanites, in that sense. See, we tend to look at these names and think biology. We think biological descent—genetics. Because we're moderns. This stuff is about geography. And the geography is affected by people (yes, people) who were living in the land of Canaan before Israel ever got there. And Canaan (the descendant of Noah)... And hence the land named after him is going to be cursed by God. So you could actually look at the conquest as part of the fulfillment of that curse. And why is Canaan cursed? Why...? It gives us a link back to the flood. The people who come here—the Amorites, the Hittite-Hurrians, the Sea Peoples—all bring with them not only their own giant traditions, but their own literature about themselves and their relationship to Babylon and the pre- and post-flood Apkallu, the survival of the civilization of Babylon, all that stuff. The Hittite-Hurrian stories of primeval history are drawn from the earlier Sumerian and Akkadian and Mesopotamian stuff. It's the same thing with the Sea Peoples. They're from the Aegean. The

Aegean stories about all this stuff are drawn from earlier Mesopotamian (i.e., Babylonian) material.

This is a whole complex matrix of ideas. If you're an ancient people group and you're writing this material or you're reading it after the fact, you know where these people... You know what the theological labeling and heritage of these people groups are. If you are a literature reader of the Hebrew Bible, you know this. And it helps inform you as to why these people groups get named in expulsion lists and why a number of them are targeted for destruction. Because they are in a theological stream and a historical, boots-on-the-ground stream of tradition about peoples who descended from the flood by virtue of the bad guys (if you're an Israelite), by virtue of rivals to Yahweh, who in their religion and your religion, they were raised up by supernatural seed.

This is the story. This is the storyline. This is the content. This is the material. This is the theology. And what I tried to do in *Unseen Realm* is give people the skeleton of this. But this is how the conquest needs to be framed. The people group names are important. Who they ultimately descend from geographically... There's no way you can do this *ethnographically*. You're real limited there. You can do a little bit. But geographically—geography is the issue. Because geography puts you in a place. When you're in that place, that place has their religion, their traditions. And those religions and traditions are traceable back to Babylon, who is the chaos agent, the anti-Eden, the force of everything against the way God wants it for Genesis 1-11, and really for the rest of the Bible—the Torah especially.

All these things concatenate together. They're not accidental. They're not random. They're not meaningless. It's just that we don't have really any of that frame of reference in our heads. So we read these things in a different way. What I'm trying to do... The start of it in *Unseen Realm*, the Lubbock conference, and I'm going to be working on this for years. This is coherent, taken on its own terms. And it helps us intelligently discuss what the thinking was when Israel was going in to take the land—what they thought about the commands like, "When you're in this place, these people are devoted to destruction." Some of these are expulsions, "You can drive this..." But here specifically, we have *kharem*—"devote to destruction." This is an offering back to the Lord. Why would God do that? It's because of all these connections—the geographical, the theological, religious connections. That's why. That's how a writer and a reader would have framed this kind of material. So we miss all of that. A lot of scholars and theologians don't even think about it. They never run into it. So it's not part of how they try to address these passages. That's not a sin or anything. I'm just telling you, that's just the way it is. We're going a different route. And we have good reasons for going there and for framing it that way. But this is a work in progress.

But here, since we're in Exodus 23, we run into this stuff, and there it is. And this becomes part of the picture. So next time, we're going to hit Exodus 24. I don't know if we're going to spend one or two episodes on that, because we have the covenant ceremony and then the divine banquet tradition. There's just a lot packed in (especially to the second one) that's really important and is going to be new to a lot of people. So we'll see. It's either going to be one or two parts to Exodus 24.

**TS:** And when can we expect *Unseen Realm 2* to come out, Mike?

**MH:** [laughs] Who knows?

**TS:** That's a serious question.

**MH:** Yeah, that's a serious answer. [laughs] It's not a flippant answer; it's a real answer.

**TS:** I hear ya. Alright, sounds good. Hopefully everybody's enjoying themselves at the conference, Mike, including us. And if you didn't make it or catch the livestream, you can always watch it on demand by going to [NakedBibleConference.com](http://NakedBibleConference.com). We hope you join us one way or the other. And Mike, we'll look forward to Exodus 24 next week. And with that, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.

1:05:00